BILL & TED'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE

Production Information

Bill Preston and Ted Logan have spent so much time forming a rock band (this week's name: Wyld Stallyns) that they're flunking history.

That's a problem not only for the high school "dudes" from San Dimas, California, but for the power structure of a future society. Bill and Ted have a role to play in the cosmic scheme of things. But unless they pass the course by pulling off a pip of a class presentation, their "excellent friendship" will be history.

Enter Rufus, a super-cool hipster from the 27th century who tours the chronos in a telephone booth, guided by millennia of Yellow Pages. He has come to send Bill and Ted on a roller-coaster ride -- hopefully an "A" ride -- through the circuits of time to pick up some pointers from "personages of historical significance."

The time-warped homework works. Not only do Bill and Ted bring the past back to life, they bring it back to San Dimas, California.

"Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure" is a Nelson Entertainment Presentation of an Orion Pictures release of An Interscope Communications Production in Association with Soisson/ Murphey Productions. The comedy-fantasy stars Keanu Reeves, Alex Winter and George Carlin as Rufus.

Directed by Stephen Herek, "Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure" was produced by Scott Kroopf, Michael S. Murphey and Joel Soisson, from a

screenplay by Chris Matheson & Ed Solomon. Ted Field and Robert W. Cort are executive producers and Stephen Deutsch is co-executive producer.

Like Bill and Ted's adventure itself, the film began with a campus friendship. Screenwriters Chris Matheson and Ed Solomon conceived the characters during a class in improvisation at UCLA.

"Afterward the characters just wouldn't go away. We were haunted by them," says Matheson whose literary lineage includes acclaimed science-fiction author Richard Matheson (his father) and screenwriter Richard Christian Matheson (an older brother).

Solomon, a former stand-up comedian who is currently executive story editor of "It's Garry Shandling's Show," recalls that "as we wrote the script, we never doubted that the movie would get made. But jumping through history, we felt sympathy for the director and production designer. Time travel is a challenge to the imagination -- and the budget."

Those flights of fantasy whisk the would-be "Wyld Stallyns" to such pivot points in mankind's progress as ancient Greece, medieval England and the White House at the height of the Civil War.

Along the way they encounter the "bodacious philosopher" Socrates; Genghis Khan ("a very excellent barbarian"); Joan of Arc ("Noah's wife"); Napoleon ("the short, dead dude"); Ludwig van Beethoven (the Van Halen of his time); Abraham Lincoln ("the dude on the penny"); Billy the Kid; Dr. Sigmund Freud; and a pair of piquant princesses in Plantaganet peril.

But even a cram course from such superlative tutors isn't enough for a pair of students who've been rocking and lolling through the whole

semester. Bill and Ted ferry their mentors back through the fourth dimension for a quick look at life in our time, courtesy of a San Dimas shopping mall, prior to their crunch presentation.

Thus it is that Napoleon meets his Waterloo on a water slide; Lincoln forswears four-scoring; Joan of Arc proves her mettle; Beethoven takes up heavy metal; and a sporting-goods store feels the wrath of Khan.

From the moment they were cast as Bill and Ted, respectively, Alex Winter and Keanu Reeves began "hanging out together." Since the aspiring rock stars are portrayed as lifelong friends, "we wanted to pick up on that emotional shorthand that happens when two people really know each other well," says Reeves.

"Ted's the dreamer, the child in the woods. Bill's the mastermind whose brainstorms get them in and out of trouble. But they're so connected that if you ask them a question, you'll get the same answer from either one, even if it's wrong."

(Typical: "Who was Caesar?" Answer: "The dude who invented salad dressing.")

There's a part of Bill and Ted in almost everyone," adds Winter who has harnessed his own "over-active imagination" into making offbeat comedies between acting assignments. (He describes "Squeal of Death," a two-year project which he directed at New York University, as a "cross between Akiro Kurosawa and Tex Avery.")

Reeves, who was born in Beirut, Lebanon, and was raised in such far-flung climes as Hawaii, New York and Ontario, Canada, admits that, like his character, he was an academic dawdler who spent more time in

Toronto's ultra-modern subway system than he did in high school. "Then I started acting," he recalls, "and my interest in school -- and almost everything else -- heated up."

By the same token, says Winter, "Bill and Ted aren't as backward as their grades suggest. They just need an incentive, a quick kick in the cosmos."

That well-aimed boot through the time-space continuum is provided by George Carlin as Rufus, the mysterious courier from the 27th century whose telephone booth and wit are equally time-warped. "Rufus is very highly evolved," explains Carlin. "He's the embodiment of 700 years of elapsed rock-and-roll cool. He's a pretty hip dresser, even for the 27th century. And he appreciates that since history is where it's at, or at least where it was, it's never boring."

The same applies to evoking the past. The film's supporting players researched their roles in depth to twirl the fun around a core of fact. Some admittedly had a head start. Robert V. Barron has toured the country in a one-man show as Abe Lincoln, and has played the sixteenth president in everything from docu-dramas to rock videos. (This was, however, the first time he was called on to conclude the Gettysburg Address with the immortal words, "Party on, dudes.")

While Al Leong grew up in St. Louis, the film's Genghis Khan is among the world's leading "lion dancers" (an ancient Chinese ritual involving caped, masked performers) who enjoys a rich knowledge of his ancestry.

Tony Steedman, an alumnus of the Royal Shakespeare Company who has played Charles Darwin, Dr. Samuel Johnson and the Bard's Anthony, was unfazed by Socrates. "There aren't many people who can question my interpretation," he points out.

For such behind-the-scenes collaborators as production designer Roy Forge Smith, costume designer Jill Ohanneson and makeup designers Daniel Marc and Patti Brand, the challenge was multiplied. Ohanneson was called on to style Roman togas, Napoleonic uniforms, western regalia and the proper attire for a Mongolian warlord, back from a hard day of looting and pillaging, frequently in the same time span.

"It was like working on a dozen different Cecil B. DeMille epics at once," says director Stephen Herek. "But the characters had to be believable before they could become amusing."

Herek, who worked for Roger Corman as an editor and then made his directing bow with "Critters," filmed "Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure" largely in Phoenix, Arizona, then moved on to Rome for two weeks' work amidst castles and coliseums.

The balmy Phoenix weather was a blessing for Terry Camilleri who plays Napoleon and who, for reasons that make perfectly good sense in the script, is attracted to a modern aquatic theme park. For several days, he slid down slick, churning water slides, dashing ahead of less compulsive customers.

("It figures," said Rod Loomis who plays Sigmund Freud. "He has a Napoleonic complex.")

Many of the city's landmarks served as film sites, including the famous western town standing in the saguaro cactus-studded desert near the Carefree Studios and the gleaming new Phoenix Metrocenter. It is there in the sprawling mall that Joan of Arc hears voices that tell her to sign up for aerobics, Beethoven swipes a synthesizer, Genghis Khan takes batting practice and the time-travelers are hauled off to the hoosegow, despite the philosophic pleas of Socrates.

The only studio sequence took place at the Carefree Studios, where a gleaming futuristic dome was constructed. Here "The Three Most Important People in the World" (portrayed by rock stars Clarence Clemons, Martha Davis and Fee Waybill) dispatch Rufus on his historic mission. Putting personal comfort aside, the trio spent several hours daily suspended from an elaborate system of pulleys and counterweights.

A huge, sophisticated crane was also constructed to hoist the "flying" phone booth and its inhabitants, then set it gently down in such incongruous locales as a convenience-store parking lot.

As wondrous as it is, the telephonic time machine still contains one modern hang-up. When Bill and Ted are trapped by axe-wielding guards during the reign of Richard II, they dash for the phone booth to try to dial a way out of the mess. But all they hear, echoing through the endless corridors of time, is a recorded voice which informs them: "The number you have dialed is not service. Please check your directory and dial again."

About the Cast . . .

Ted, the eternal optimist of the team, who logically observes that their rock band will improve when they have triumphant tee-shirts -- and learn to play musical instruments -- is portrayed by KEANU REEVES.

Like his character, Reeves has done a bit of traveling. Born in Beirut, Lebanon, to globetrotting parents, he grew up in Hawaii, New York and Canada before settling down in the California beach town of Venice.

It was during his Toronto, Ontario, period that Reeves began his acting career. Just 16 at the time, he was cast in the Canadian television series, "Hanging In." Enrolling for studies with drama coach Jasper Deeter (a founding member of the Provincetown Players), Reeves continued to polish his craft with performances on Canadian stages as well.

American audiences first saw him in the television films "Under the Influence," "Babes in Toyland" and HBO's "Act of Vengeance." Since his motion picture debut opposite Rob Lowe in the 1986 ice-hockey drama, "Youngblood," Reeves has appeared in "The Night Before," "I Wish I Were Eighteen Again" and the controversial "River's Edge," for which he is perhaps best known.

To Bill Preston, friendship is everything. And when his best pal, Ted, is threatened with exile to military school, no solution is too "unprecedented." If that means wandering through the time-space

continuum "collecting speakers for an oral report," his only question is . . . who can they "bag?"

ALEX WINTER, who plays the role, has been acting since he was seven. By 14 he was co-starring on Broadway, and at 21 was a graduate of the film school at New York University.

Born in London to a pair of professional dancers, Winter moved with his family to St. Louis, Missouri, where he spent his childhood on the stages of local community theatres. Relocating to New York, he starred with Yul Brynner and Constance Towers in a hit revival of "The King and I," then toured with the show. He returned to Manhattan for a Broadway production of "Peter Pan," and stayed to appear off Broadway as well.

After completing his studies at NYU, where his senior project was a short comedy film entitled "Squeal of Death" -- which he wrote, produced, directed and starred in -- Winter moved to Los Angeles to begin his motion picture career.

Following his screen bow in "Death Wish III," he was among the adolescent vampires of the supernatural hit, "The Lost Boys," then co-starred with Eric Stoltz and Laura Dern in "Haunted Summer."

When the ultra-hip Rufus suddenly appears in a phone booth to send the wayward students through the circuits of time, it comes as no surprise that he is a citizen of the 27th century. There are those who insist that GEORGE CARLIN, who portrays him, is from somewhere beyond tomorrow as well.

Noted for the innovation and daring of his insights, Carlin has staked out a special niche among today's comedians through 13 hit albums and a string of top-rated TV specials. Carlin also won acclaim for his performance in the hit film "Outrageous Fortune."

A native New Yorker, he began his career as a radio disc jockey with an ear for dialects and an eye for the ludicrous. Segueing to nightclubs, he found his metier in live performance.

As his popularity grew, so did his cross-country concert schedule. He now averages over 100 one-man shows a year. He has also guest-hosted "Saturday Night Live" and enlivened Johnny Carson's "Tonight Show."

Carlin made his screen bow in "With Six You Get Eggroll" in 1966, then followed with "Car Wash" ten years later.

"I guess I made only one movie a decade because I couldn't understand film performance," he explains. "But now, thanks to acting classes and a personal calm within myself, I feel much more at home on a sound stage. I'm planning to explore this whole thing a lot more."

Ordering Rufus to explore history with two totally untutored teen-agers are the interplanetary rulers known as the "Three Most Important People in the World." They are played by CLARENCE CLEMONS, MARTHA DAVIS and FEE WAYBILL, three people of import in contemporary music.

Clemons is known to millions of rock fans as "The Big Man," the exuberant sax player who has toured and recorded with best friend Bruce Springsteen for nearly two decades. When not with the Boss, Clemons'

successful career has included the hit "You're a Friend of Mine," which he sang with Jackson Browne on his debut album. Currently at work on a second LP, Clemons made his film bow in "New York, New York."

Martha Davis began her singing career in the late 1970s. With her own band, The Motels, she recorded "Take the L," "Only the Lonely" and "Suddenly, Last Summer," all of which sold more than a million copies. Now a solo artist, she is currently finishing a new album.

Waybill is best known as the lead singer of the outrageous rock group, The Tubes. Infamous for his wild stage antics, he initially made his mark with the hit "White Punks on Dope" and then later with the songs "She's a Beauty" and "Don't Touch Me There." He made his film debut in "Ladies and Gentlemen, The Fabulous Stains . . . " and also appeared with The Tubes in "Xanadu. "

Among a gallery of great men and women transported from the past to a modern galleria are:

- Abraham Lincoln, played by ROBERT V. BARRON.
  No stranger to portraying the Great Emancipator, Barron has toured as Honest Abe in his own one-man show. Beginning his career as a script writer, he spent eight years working on television's "Bonanza," then moved into acting with "Amazing Stories," "Night Court" and "No Soap, Radio." He has since appeared in the films "Mrs. Soffel," "The Adventures of Buckaroo Bonzai," "Honkytonk Man," "Eating Raoul" and "Frances." He is currently the executive

director of talent and development for Saban Productions, which specializes in animation.

- Napoleon Bonaparte, played by TERRY CAMILLERI.
A native of Australia, he is fluent in five languages and has appeared in films, theatre and television in several countries. Among his more recent films are "In the Mood," "Dutch Treat," "Let's Get Harry," "Superman III," "Back Roads," "The Cars That Ate Paris" and "Money Moves." His many television credits include "Hard Copy," "Hill Street Blues," "Heart of the City" and the miniseries "The Immigrants."

- Ludwig van Beethoven, played by CLIFFORD DAVID.
Well-credentialed on stage and screen, David has starred on Broadway in "1776," "On a Clear Day You Can See Forever," "Camino Real" with Al Pacino, "Caligula," "The Aspern Papers" and "Wildcat" with Lucille Ball. He also appeared in Joseph Papp's production of "Hamlet" in Central Park and starred in many regional theatre companies. His films include "Fort Apache, The Bronx," "Resurrection," "The Betsy" and "Agent on Ice," while TV viewers have seen him in "Blind Ambition," "Fear on Trial," "Missiles of October" and "The Equalizer."

- Genghis Khan, played by AL LEONG.
Known as a top stuntman and martial-arts expert, Leong has appeared in such films as "Lethal Weapon," "The Golden Child," "She's Having a Baby," "Steele Justice," "Big Trouble in Little China"

and "Running Scared." On television, Leong has guest-starred on "Magnum, P.I.," "The Equalizer," "Spenser for Hire" and "The A-Team." He is also adept at "lion dancing," a form of street performance based on an ancient ritual in which Leong and a partner are clad in massive, colorful masks and capes.

- Dr. Sigmund Freud, played by ROD LOOMIS.
  After earning a master of fine arts degree from Brandeis University, Loomis attended the American Academy of Dramatic Arts, then toured with the national companies of "1776," "The Merry Widow," "The Sound of Music" and "Uncle Vanya." His screen credits include "Body Double," "Beastmaster" and "Man on a Swing." His many television appearances include roles on "Dynasty," "Matt Houston," "General Hospital" and "The Young and the Restless."

- Billy the Kid, played by DAN SHOR.
  Educated at both Northwestern University and the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art, Shor starred on Broadway in "Equus," and has appeared in such films as "Stranger's Kiss," "Mike's Murder," "Talk to Me," "Strange Behavior," "Tron," "Back Roads" and "Wise Blood." On television, he was Detective Newman, a regular on "Cagney and Lacey," and has also been seen in the miniseries "The Blue and the Gray," "Rumor of War," "Studs Lonigan" and "Friendly Fire."

- Socrates, played by TONY STEEDMAN.

  A native of England, Steedman has spent most of his career on stage with the Royal Shakespeare and Birmingham Repertory companies, in shows ranging from "Hamlet" to "Oklahoma." He has also amassed starring credits on the BBC television dramas "Charles Darwin" and "Dr. Samuel Johnson," as well as the acclaimed series "Coronation Street," shown in America on PBS. Other American television credits include "The Fall Guy," "The A-Team" and "Crossings." "Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure" marks his second film appearance following "The Abdication."

- Joan of Arc, played by JANE WIEDLIN.

  Best known as a founding member of the rock group, The GoGos, the guitarist and singer wrote many of the renowned all-girl band's hits on three chart-topping albums, "Beauty and the Beat," "Vacation" and "Talk Show." After leaving the group to pursue a solo career, she scored a hit single with "Blue Kiss" from her debut album, "Jane Wiedlin." Her film career includes roles in "Clue," "Star Trek IV" and "Sleeping Beauty."

The 14th-century princesses saved by Bill and Ted from a fate worse than feudalism are played by DIANE FRANKLIN and KIMBERLEY LA BELLE.

Franklin (Princess Joanna) began her film career at age 19 as the star of "The Last American Virgin." Other feature credits include "Amityville II," "TerrorVision" and "Better Off Dead," while television

audiences have seen her in "Summer Girl," "Deadly Lessons" and the series "Boone" and "Bay City Blues."

Kimberley La Belle (Princess Elizabeth) has appeared on television in "Hunter," "Riptide," "Stingray," "The A-Team" and "Days of Our Lives." She has also co-starred with Martin Mull in Cinemax's "History of White People in America" and director Harry Shearer's comedy special starring Paul Shaffer, "Viva Shaf Vegas."

The instigator of Bill and Ted's excellent adventure is history teacher Mr. Ryan, played by BERNIE CASEY.

Retired in 1968 from a professional football career -- in which he set receiving records for both the San Francisco 49ers and the Los Angeles Rams -- Casey made his film debut in "The Guns of the Magnificent Seven" and went on to appear in "Boxcar Bertha," "Cleopatra Jones," "Black Gun," "The Man Who Fell to Earth," "Sharky's Machine" and "Never Say Never Again." On television he's been seen in "Brian's Song," "Roots," "The Martian Chronicles," "Bay City Blues" and "Harris & Co.," television's first black dramatic series. Casey is also an accomplished artist.

About the Filmmakers . . .

STEPHEN HEREK, director of "Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure," began his motion picture career as an editor for producer Roger Corman at New World Pictures. After working on several films with Corman, he was given his first chance to direct a feature film with "Critters," an innovative science-fiction thriller. It was his deft control of that film -- on a relatively low budget -- that impressed the "Bill & Ted" powers-that-be.

"It's certainly a different world outside of the editing room," Herek says. "I now have the luxury of shooting the angles and scenes I want instead of moaning over what I was given to work with by someone else. It's terrific. I've never looked back."

Producer SCOTT KROOPF began his entertainment career far from the silver screen as a legitimate theatre director, and later as a designer of exclusive nightclubs such as The Palace in Hollywood. He entered the motion picture industry as a development executive, and in 1982 he was named executive in charge of creative affairs for Embassy Pictures. He remained with Embassy until 1985 when he joined Interscope Communications, Inc., as vice president in charge of production. He co-produced the hit comedy "Outrageous Fortune" for Interscope before starting production of "Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure."

MICHAEL S. MURPHEY and JOEL SOISSON, producers of "Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure," first worked together as executives in charge of production on independent features for Sandy Howard's Republic Entertainment International in 1983. For Howard, the duo produced "Avenging Angel" and "The Boys Next Door." Next they wrote and produced "Hambone and Hillie" and "The Supernaturals," then produced the top-grossing thriller "Nightmare on Elm Street II -- Freddy's Revenge," and produced and wrote "Trick or Treat" before beginning work on "Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure."

Screenwriters CHRIS MATHESON and ED SOLOMON both make their film debuts with "Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure." Outside of the fact that the film is the first produced screenplay for both writers, the two friends also appear on screen as two overzealous waiters who stuff Napoleon full of American ice cream.

The pair met for the first time on the UCLA campus, where economics student Solomon and theatre arts major Matheson became involved in a campus improvisation group. It was through this ensemble that the original Bill and Ted came to life.

Matheson hails from a screenwriting family. His father, Richard, is a renowned science-fiction author (among his credits: TV's original "Twilight Zone" as well as the films "Somewhere in Time" and "Jaws III"). His older brother, Richard Christian, was recently represented by Universal's "3 O'Clock High." With several other film projects in development, Matheson's ultimate goal is to direct his own scripts.

Solomon began his writing career at 21 when he joined the writing staff of the series "Laverne and Shirley." He toured the country as a stand-up comic after leaving UCLA and contributed material to many top comedians, including Garry Shandling. His association with that performer led to his appointment as executive story editor on Showtime's highly-acclaimed series, "It's Garry Shandling's Show."

Executive producer TED FIELD is a Los Angeles businessman with a wide range of business, political and philanthropic interests. As the owner of Interscope Communications, Inc., he has been a force in the company's rapid success as a source of independent motion picture and television entertainment. His companies are also involved in land development, real estate investment and the manufacture and merchandising of camera equipment (through the acquisition of Panavision, Inc.).

The second son of the late Marshall Field IV, he grew up in Chicago and Alaska. After attending the University of Chicago and Pomona College, he became a principal of Chicago-based Field Enterprises, Inc., then moved ten years ago to the West Coast. Mr. Field is a member of the Democratic National Committee and a respected contributor to the arts, medical research and causes including legislative reform.

Executive producer ROBERT W. CORT has been President of Interscope Communications, Inc., since 1985. During that period, he has produced Interscope's "Cocktail," "Three Men and a Baby" and "Outrageous Fortune," all for Touchstone Pictures; "The Seventh Sign" for

Tri-Star; "Revenge of the Nerds, Part II: Nerds in Paradise" for Twentieth Century Fox and "Critical Condition" for Paramount.

He came to Interscope from Twentieth Century Fox where, as Executive Vice President of Production, he oversaw the creative development of such hits as "Romancing the Stone," "Bachelor Party" and "All the Right Moves."

A graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, Cort received a master's degree in business administration from the Wharton School. After serving with the CIA in Washington, he became a management consultant in consumer marketing, then joined Columbia pictures where, in 1977, he was named Vice President of Advertising, Publicity and Promotion. He subsequently served as Executive Vice President in charge of Worldwide Advertising, Publicity and Promotion at Twentieth Century Fox, prior to assuming a key production post at that studio..